

Board of Education Meeting
February 4, 2014

Call to Order

Board Chair, Robert Eccles, called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Media Center. Present: Board members Robert Eccles, Lori D'Ostuni, Jeanne Gee, Scott Schneider, George Beiter, Natalie Semyanko, Michelle Zawawi (arrived at 6:38 p.m.); Superintendent, Karen Baldwin, Assistant Superintendent, Jim Collin, and Interim Business Manager, Phil Russell.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Chair Eccles suggested tabling item C (Adoption of SEED) under Discussion/Action Items due to the recent announcement by Governor Malloy relative to proposed flexibility guidelines in the implementation of SEED by local school districts. Board member Gee asked if it is legal to change legislation. Board Chair Eccles said the State Board of Education had a meeting scheduled tomorrow to discuss this but it has been canceled due to the impending bad weather. The new deadline for implementation is now the end of March. It is unclear if that deadline will remain for the end of March, and it is also unclear the details required by local school districts. Board Chair Eccles stated there is much uncertainty at the State level, so it is best to table this item until the implementation plan is better established.

MOTION #14-03: D'Ostuni moved, Semyanko seconded to table this item. Board member Schneider asked how the district's timeline will be affected by tabling this item. Superintendent Baldwin said it does not change the district's process. She will meet with the Professional Learning Committee to determine how the district should proceed. The results of that meeting will be reported to the Board and the administration will make a recommendation to the Board at that time with the flexibilities determined best for the district. All members voted in favor of tabling Item C under Discussion/Action Items. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Doriana Vicedomini spoke on the home-schooling policy that was on the January 7, 2014 Board meeting agenda. She said she agreed with Board member Beiter's statement that the home-schooling policy should be inclusive of home-schooled children as there are many reasons that children are home-schooled.

Mr. Mark Janick, SEA Union president, passed out a document to Board members regarding the implementation of SEED by the district, which he read into the record (attached). He said the SEA body of educators is dedicated to the advancement of students and educators. The original plan has not been adopted by Suffield and is now getting an extension from the State. The SEA is asking the board to revise the plan to reflect changes highlighted by the State. Currently, three formal and three informal observations are required each year. Research shows that requirement is difficult to reach. Flexibility provides for one observation every three years and three informal observations on all the other years for teachers teaching more than two years with ratings in the top two categories. Currently one to four Student Learning Objectives (SLO) are required. Flexibility provides for one SLO, which is better to meet the needs of educators and students. Mr. Janick said it was important to the SEA that their voices were heard by the board before a decision is made.

A Windsor Locks parent of an Agri-science student said she is seeing progress at the large animal facilities and is hopeful it will remain a priority for the Board.

Communications

None

Approval of Minutes

Schneider moved, D'Ostuni seconded to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2014 Board of Education meeting as presented. All members voted in favor except Board member Semyanko, who abstained. The motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Beiter moved, D'Ostuni seconded to remove the virtual online learning for credit recovery policy from the consent agenda for the purpose of discussion.

MOTION #14-04: D'Ostuni moved, Gee seconded to approve the following items on the consent agenda:

Policy #1330.2 – Use of School Facilities – Pool Safety
Business Manager Job Description
Field Trip Request – SHS Robotics Team – Durham, NH
Field Trip Request – SHS Robotics Team – St. Louis, MO
Field Trip Request – SHS Lacrosse Team – Seneca Nation, NY

All members voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

Board member Beiter wanted clarification that virtual/online learning for enrichment will immediately be offered to students. Superintendent Baldwin said that policy cannot be implemented immediately but is on the Policy Subcommittee's future agenda. She said the district is moving to 1:1 digital learning next year and the online/virtual learning for enrichment will be appropriate to have in place at that time. Details such as looking at structure of those courses and credits need to be determined. Board member Beiter would like to see that accelerated. He supports online/virtual learning for credit recovery but thinks the policy should be inclusive for all students. Superintendent Baldwin said that sentiment has been communicated by Policy subcommittee members and Board member Beiter's voice is well represented at subcommittee.

MOTION #14-05: D'Ostuni moved, Gee seconded to approve Policy #6172.6 – Virtual/Online Learning for Credit Recovery

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion/Action Items

- Special Education Continuous Improvement Plan
Superintendent Baldwin introduced Marie Davis and Dianna Kolodziej and recognized many staff members present in the audience who are working on the Special Education Continuous Improvement Plan.

Dr. Collin presented the changes taking place and highlighted the district's theory of action. He said the key elements of improvement and change are structural and cultural. Administrators looked at what type of infrastructure we are trying to build and a methodology of best practices that align across the district (K-12). Once the infrastructure is in place,

administrators have a foundation to work with. The other piece that is really important is culture, the perception of all stakeholders. The idea should not be that special education and general education are separate. The plan will be evaluated with evidence in documentation, program delivery and conversations among educators, administrators and parents.

The key findings from the CREC report of 2011 revealed the need to: (1) increase focus on teaching and learning, high quality services, and fidelity of implementation for student with disabilities; (2) meet the State target for all areas on CMT and CAPT for students with disabilities and establish targets for common assessments; (3) increase opportunities within the district for students with significant disabilities to be served; (4) implement and monitor consistent standards across the district for parent communication, service hours and development of service delivery model, data collection, and analysis and sharing of that data; (5) improving transitions at all levels; and (6) improve communication and collaboration with parents.

Dr. Marie Davis, 6-12 Special Education Supervisor, explained her role is to work with teachers and therapists to determine and meet the needs of the special education students. She said characteristics from the CREC report are evidenced in all of her cases. The key factor to implementing the plan is to establish a collaborative partnership with parents. All the work is driven by the PPT process and parents are integral to that process. This idea of collaboration with parents feeds into the cultural aspect. It creates a warm, responsive environment that encourages an open relationship with parents and the idea that they are very valued as part of the team needs to be conveyed. Information that parents bring to any meeting is important to the team to reach the student's goals and objectives. Educators need to review students' progress and concerns with parents in a cohesive manner. She said good data is the key to developing a good IEP for each student. In certain cases there are more complex concerns so a consultant who focuses on specialized areas in special education is brought into the team. These consultants are able to work together with the collaborative team including parents to look at areas of concern, look at data on community activities, independent living skills, etc. Dr. Davis gave specific examples where students have benefited from this approach.

Dr. Collin added that in proposing changes for programs and services, a confidence level needs to be achieved by the parents and that can be done with the collaboration Dr. Davis discussed. It is a dynamic environment and strategies need to change, which requires administration and teachers to reach out and deliver on what is promised.

Ms. Dianna Kolodziey, Pre-K-5 Special Education Supervisor, highlighted the preschool program. The structure is led by Principal Scott Dunn and supported by Ms. Kolodziey and the curriculum supervisors. The previous program had two teachers, but this year because of the influx of students, there are three teachers. Currently in process for preschool is building the infrastructure from Pre-K through grade 3, and this is supported by Sophia Gintoff, ELA Supervisor, and Kris Pryce. The program focuses on integrating services that are based on student need and are data driven. Currently the preschool is piloting a program (PACT) which is a language acquisition program. Again, the collaborative aspect with parents to all work together to meld these services and build understanding is crucial to the success of the program.

Dr. Collin concluded the presentation by discussing the theory of action which uses data to examine the school, classroom and student progress and provides the structure for teacher collaboration to develop interventions to increase student learning. He discussed what quality

Tier I instruction looks like and discussed the next steps in implementing the plan, which are to continue working on a Standards Based Reporting Tool and IEP alignment standards; strengthen protocols, procedures, and the data system for development of student behavioral support plans; provide ongoing paraprofessional training; improved planning for transition needs of special education students at SHS; review of co-taught classes and enrollment disproportionality at SHS; and review of “basic” courses at SHS.

Board Chair Eccles asked what the Board can do to support and further this work. Dr. Collin said the Board can strengthen Tier I during the budget process. Teachers will embrace the plan but they will need support to do the work. Allowing teachers to be together and collaborate with one another is an important component to implementing this change.

Board member Gee noted the importance of an authentic relationship with parents of special education students, and she said that structure exists at Spaulding and McAlister and is evidenced in team meetings at Middle School. She asked what is underway at the high school to integrate special education students. Dr. Collin said collaborative time for these teachers who have these students needs to be instituted. Board member Semyanko said annual special education student reviews are coming up and inquired as to how those schedules will get integrated into the plan. Dr. Collin said one of the challenges around the high school is building a schedule that will allow for common preparation time for all educators involved with these students. It is a challenge the administration is trying to solve.

Superintendent Baldwin said the administration is looking at how co-teaching is serving students. Currently, high school administration and teachers are analyzing the data and determining next steps including sharing the information with parents.

Board member D’Ostuni said she would like to see specific evidence of the key findings that illustrates progress has been made in each category along with the anecdotal examples from tonight’s presentation. Dr. Collin stated the information can be provided to the Board. One example that will be shared at the next SPEDPAC meeting is a SDE survey of parents of children with special needs in 2006-2007 and again last year. The data is positive. Superintendent Baldwin said that evidence can be shown to the Board at a future board meeting.

- December 2013 Financial Report

Phil Russell, Interim Business Manager, said the district is projecting an end-of-year surplus for the first time this year. He cautioned though that the budget is very tight, and the extremely cold weather greatly affects the budget. There is great fluctuation in the budget from month to month. He highlighted the six deficit items, but noted there is less of a shortfall in health care than expected. For the first time the food services account showed a \$2,000+ surplus, but there is still a \$37,000 shortfall in food services when all items are included. He noted the substitute services account has a \$54,000 savings this year over last year. There are moderate gains in electricity. Board member Schneider asked if those gains are due to the installation of capacitors at the high school. Mr. Russell said he monitors the electric meters and he is seeing some gains at the high school. He said the cold weather has had a significant impact and it is difficult to make an accurate prediction. Board member Beiter asked if the \$2,000 surplus in food services means the Board is not paying their health insurance. Mr. Russell said half of the insurance payments have been taken out.

Board Chair Eccles asked if the Food Service financials could show year to date totals versus last year's year-to-date totals for the same month. Mr. Russell said he could make that change. There is good participation in the McAlister breakfast program. The administration is looking at sustainability of the food service operation and is currently in negotiations with the food service union.

Board member D'Ostuni inquired about the catering line item on the food service income statement. She asked if that is a situation where we cater events that we pay for from another area of our budget. Mr. Russell said the catering line item includes any sales other than student sales, such as staff purchases. Board member Beiter said that Bob's comparison of the year-to-date same month would be helpful.

Board member Gee asked if an analysis on Kelly Services is scheduled to come before the Board soon, and if some of the controls and approaches to managing staff absences was a permanent change or just instituted because of budgetary reasons this year. Superintendent Baldwin said the administration can provide a report and that some immediate changes needed to be done last year based on the district's budget predicament, but in looking at that, there are opportunities to make beneficial changes. Board Chair Eccles and Superintendent Baldwin decided a report could be provided by April.

- Adoption of System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED)

This item was tabled above.

- Review of the Draft 2014-2015 School Calendar

Board member Gee said she liked the new calendar format. Superintendent Baldwin said the 2014-15 calendar represents change to previous years' calendars. It was developed collaboratively with the SEA and the leadership team. School starts after Labor Day, and this was done purposefully in order to have a strong, coherent approach for professional learning for staff critical in implementing teacher evaluations, transitioning to 1:1 learning environments; and developing a professional learning environment. Starting after Labor Day also allows for more time for the leadership team to collaborate. The projected last day of school is June 15, a reasonable target date. Board Chair Eccles said the Board can bring this item to vote at next meeting, and if board members have questions in interim they can ask Board Chair Eccles or Superintendent Baldwin. Board member D'Ostuni asked if the June high school exam schedule was correct because there were five high school exam days listed in June as opposed to four days for exams in January. Superintendent Baldwin said she will confirm the high school exam dates. Board member D'Ostuni also noted that spring vacation was not separate from Good Friday, which could save a day at the end of the year which currently ends on a Monday, although snow days are usually an issue. The Superintendent discussed Good Friday and April vacation break with staff and the feedback was separating out those dates was very disruptive, and there is better continuity for teaching and learning when the April vacation follows Good Friday. She said she also looked at other districts to figure out if Suffield would be an anomaly. She said some districts have the same week off and others have a different week off. Board member D'Ostuni said if spring vacation was the week of March 30, families of students who play spring sports may be able to take vacations as families since that week may fall in between winter and spring sport seasons. Superintendent Baldwin said she believed the sports schedules are in place for fall, but she was not sure about winter or

spring 2014-2015. Board member D'Ostuni said it could be extrapolated based on the fall dates. She would like to know that information before the Board votes on next year's calendar. Board member Gee asked if there was a discussion about having school on Veteran's Day. Board member Zawawi said that determination will have to wait for the teacher's contract. Board Chair Eccles said it is not a teacher issue but a political issue. Superintendent Baldwin said she did not examine Veteran's Day. The non-certified staff union has Veteran's Day as a paid holiday. Collective bargaining is about to begin with the Teamsters. Board member Zawawi said educationally you want to have a strong fall and it also provides the opportunity to educate students about Veteran's Day on that day. Board member Beiter asked if there is any flexibility in adding or subtracting from the required 180 days of school. Superintendent Baldwin said the 183 days is driven by the teachers' contract, and 180 days is State statutory, but the Board does have flexibility. Board member Zawawi asked if holding graduation on another day besides Saturday was considered. Superintendent Baldwin said the Board can establish a firm graduation date after April 1 each year. If there is interest in changing graduation from Saturday to mid-week, conversations and planning needs to start now for next year, but it is too late to change it for this year.

- Overview of Security Audit Findings

Superintendent Baldwin introduced Larry Plano, Director of Facilities, who has done a great amount of work around school security. The district has participated in a State security audit which took place on January 23, and 27. Superintendent will talk to the Board of Selectmen as their meeting on February 5 to talk about the security grant, security audit and what the district has been doing to increase security in its schools.

Mr. Plano highlighted the legislative changes that have taken place over the last year and how it affects school districts. The assessment was conducted by the State Police and they had a common sense approach to what was being done and what needs to be done. He said the State Police walked through the schools with Terry Antrum, School Resource Officer, Superintendent Baldwin, John Woods, Town Emergency Management Director, and himself. This audit will take place every two years. The audit focused on all hazards and how to prevent or mitigate any hazard. The district's goal is to prevent or slow down hazards and increase response time through communication. Mr. Plano illustrated with an example in which the Suffield Middle School Media Center has two entrances. If everyone enters from the back media center door and the front one is locked, it will slow down anyone not wanted giving police extra response time that may be critical. Cultural change needs to take place. The district needs to communicate to the community the importance of being vigilant in security measures.

Suffield Public Schools was awarded \$1,388,788 million for the security grant. The State will fund \$674,216 leaving a matching grant for the Town of \$664,572. The matching grant was not part of the grant stipulations during the grant application process. The district must spend 25% of the total project prior to State reimbursement. Mr. Plano highlighted what was requested in the grant and how it aligned with the security audit. A lot of items in the audit were not in the grant but were not costly items, such as changing how visitors sign in to a school.

Board member Beiter asked if the police actively brought up these items or did they naturally come up in the audit. Mr. Plano said he did not prompt them. An example was the vestibules that came up in the audit and the police had good ideas on how to improve it. Superintendent

Baldwin added that the police tested the security system at school entrances (being buzzed in), and they came up with good modifications to improve entryways without a lot of construction. Superintendent Baldwin met with the First Selectman today and shared this information with him as well. She said she believes the district can be successful in strengthening its protocols for less money, and the district can go back to the State and ask for less money. Board member Gee asked if there was any flexibility in the timeline. Superintendent Baldwin said Mr. Russell sent a request to the State asking if there was any flexibility on the June 2015 deadline to complete all the steps. To date, he has not received a response from the State. Board Chair Eccles asked if the money has to be encumbered by June 2015 in order to be reimbursed. Superintendent Baldwin said that is the case.

Mr. Plano said the district will continue its all hazards training, collaborate with local law enforcement, continue prevention/mitigation emphasis, and work with school safety committees to examine data and address ongoing concerns. The district is already acting on no cost improvements.

Board Chair Eccles pointed out that this is a continuous process. Board member Gee inquired as to what an ideal entryway looks like. Mr. Plano said an ideal entryway is a double-locking vestibule. The visitor would be buzzed in but there would be another set of locked doors before entry into the building. Board member Gee asked if the district keeps any data now on unknown visitors. Mr. Plano said each school has sign-in books as a record of visitors. Police noted it is a self sign-in system and that visitor badges should be one-time use only. Superintendent Baldwin said the State Police raised good points on training and data collection. There is a need for consistent protocols.

There will be ongoing discussions with the Facilities Subcommittee on these issues. Board member Beiter said security is an inconvenience, but the culture has to change to address safety. He asked if the Police addressed the exterior of the buildings. Mr. Plano said the exterior was a weak point for the district in the audit. The Police said it is important for the district to define the school grounds. The idea is to make a routine so if there is a deviation, it becomes obvious. Mr. Plano said afterschool activities is a great challenge, such as how to secure a facility when outside groups are using the facility after school hours. Board member Zawawi asked if all deliveries come in through the front door. Mr. Plano said that depends on school. The high school has a buzzer in the back, and kitchen deliveries go to the kitchens, but doors are locked. Those are the weakest areas. Superintendent Baldwin said police also discussed the perimeter and plantings. The grounds should be well defined and plantings should be low and not cover windows.

Reports to the Board

- Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Baldwin said the Agri-science building is progressing. The construction company pulled permits on Monday and construction on the fire pump started today. The original 75 - 80 day schedule for completion has been cut in half, about 40 days to complete. Board member Gee inquired if the manufacturer has to sign off on the project. Mr. Plano said the Town building inspector will sign off on it.

FY 2014-15 Budget Development

- The Superintendent said the budget process is underway. The budget subcommittee meeting scheduled for tomorrow evening is now rescheduled to Friday at 7:30 a.m.

because school is closed tomorrow. A lot of work has been accomplished so far and the process has been transparent and invitational to Town officials. The First Selectman and Selectman Chafetz have attended two subcommittee meetings. The Superintendent said the budget is on track to be presented to the Board at the February 19, 2014 meeting.

Middle School Continuous Improvement

- Unified Arts development at the middle school is underway to address college and career readiness. Dr. Collin tentatively is working on a schedule to increase instructional time. Within the UA block, band, chorus or both will be available to students. Also the technology course will change to a media/production type of course. Currently television studio experiences both at middle and high school is extracurricular. There is a need for a 6-12 bridge to the high school media literacy course. Currently administration is reviewing the schedule with the music department. The challenges include curriculum work and analysis of band instructional instrument classes. This new schedule eliminates study halls but offers flex time twice a week. The new schedule will be impactful in world language reform as well. Board member Zawawi asked if Quest will still be a part of the new schedule. The new scheduling scenario has an alternate day schedule to allow a flex schedule to accommodate assemblies or advisory. Board member Gee said parents support Quest. Parents highly value a “break” for kids but want to see more engaging activities. Superintendent Baldwin said the flex time addresses that. Board member Zawawi asked if other world languages will be offered. Dr. Collin said that would need to be discussed with the Board and find point people to guide that work in the future. Board member D’Ostuni said it would be beneficial if students could have the opportunity to explore different careers, such as the government listed career clusters, during the flex time.

- Chair’s Report

- Board Chair Eccles said the Town’s 2013 audit has been recalled by the auditor and will be restated and reissued at a later date. When the financial statements were issued there were some deviations in the school’s budget and operating budget on the Town side. Reporting inaccuracies is the issue, specifically a schedule where the compared actual and restated budget suggested a supplementary appropriation to the Board of \$200,000. The deviation was material enough on the school board side to recall the audit. Constituents will look at that and will ask if the Board failed to spend all of its allotted funds. Board Chair Eccles said the statement to that inquiry should be that the original audit was incorrect, has been recalled by the auditor, and will be reissued.

Subcommittees Reports

- Policy Subcommittee

Board member Gee reported on the Policy subcommittee meeting held earlier today. In discussing the head lice policy it was determined administration will reach out to parents to inform them of the new guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and inform them of the revised policy. The home-schooling policy was discussed. The subcommittee solidified a position on home-schooled students’ participation and it will return to Policy subcommittee for final review on March 4th. The subcommittee reviewed technology responsible use policies for minor editorial changes and dissolving the use of cell phone policy because it is included in the broader Bring Your Own Technology policy.

- **Budget Subcommittee**
Board member Schneider updated the Board on the Budget Subcommittee work which includes a concerted effort to increase communications and reach out to the Board of Finance. Board committee members have adopted Board of Finance members to inform them of the school district's budget progress and ask for their input in the budget process. Board member Schneider said the Board of Finance members have been very receptive. He said Board member D'Ostuni has been asked to help on the Budget subcommittee as well. He said no Board of Finance member has attended any subcommittee meetings to date.
- **Human Resources and Personnel Subcommittee**
Board member D'Ostuni said the subcommittee discussed the job descriptions of the business manager, instructional coaches and interventionist and will bring the instructional coaches and interventionist job descriptions to the Board for discussion. Analysis of Tier I, II and III was used in designing these job descriptions. The Superintendent said student programs and services will be looking at the intervention model and relevant case studies of the coaching and intervention work across the system which ties into the job descriptions discussed at the HR/Personnel subcommittee meeting.

Future Business

- Substitute Service Budget Study and Kelly Services Data
- Gender Gap Writing/SRBI
- PALS Program – 2013/2014 student data and parent survey results – June 2014
- Learning Management System status – February 2014
- School Goals – School Improvement Plan
- 2014-2015 Annual Operating Budget
- Report on technology in the district
- System of Educator Evaluation and Development

Public Comment

Ms. Doriana Vicedomini said she liked next year's calendar and is happy with all the added security at the schools. She said Newtown was very secure. The administration needs to look at the cultural piece of those who do harm to those in schools. She said we need to look at how we include everyone.

Adjournment

Beiter moved, Schneider seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori D'Ostuni
Secretary